

### Priscilla Maltby Mayden, AHIP, FMLA, 1918–2011



Priscilla Maltby Mayden, AHIP, FMLA, director emerita of the Spencer S. Eccles Health Sciences Library at the University of Utah, died May 6, 2011, in Brockton, Massachusetts. In a career that extended from manual typewriters to supercomputers and the Internet, she led an academic health sciences library with modest resources to a position of national prominence.

Priscilla's career as a librarian began as an undergraduate at Simmons College in Boston. She did not enter Simmons with the intention of becoming a librarian; rather, she was hoping to become a writer or journalist. However, in the midst of the Great Depression, these careers did not hold much promise, and Priscilla took advantage of the strong library program at Simmons and graduated with a bachelor of science degree with an emphasis in library science.

Her first professional position was at the Business and Technical Branch of the Hartford, Connecticut, Public Library, where she was introduced to the world of special libraries. After two years, for both patriotic and financial reasons, she left the library for a job at the Bendix Aviation Corporation, where her starting salary was fifty-five cents an hour, a significant increase. She became a machinist, operating a Warner and Swasey turret lathe—a real-life Rosie the Riveter. In 1944, she left Bendix and joined the Women's Army Corps and served as a librarian in Santa Ana, California. While in Santa Ana, she decided she wanted to see more of California and San Francisco, in particular. So, over her December holiday, in pouring rain, she hitchhiked by herself up the California coast to San Francisco and arrived in San

Francisco with a very wet great-coat. Following the end of the war, she was about to become a stewardess when Priscilla's sister alerted her to a position in the Veterans' Administration (VA) Hospital in Bedford, Massachusetts, where she began her distinguished career in medical libraries.

In 1952, Priscilla was offered a position in the new VA Hospital in Salt Lake City, Utah, which she promptly accepted, not least because of her love of skiing. She started that library from scratch, building a facility, a collection, and services and gaining the expertise that would serve her well and would gain her a national reputation.

After fourteen years at the VA, Priscilla began looking for new challenges. At about the same time, the University of Utah library was searching for a replacement for their medical librarian. The medical school faculty members on the search committee were familiar with Priscilla's work at the VA and felt she would be an excellent candidate. However, a master's degree was required to be appointed to the library faculty. While this might have been viewed as an obstacle by some, Priscilla saw it as a career opportunity to attend what was then the most prestigious library school in the country at Columbia University, which also gave her a chance to live in New York City. She completed her degree in 1967 and was promptly hired by the University of Utah library.

This was the good news. The bad news was Priscilla was thrown into the middle of a battle between the school of medicine and the university library. Fundamentally, the school wanted its own library in or adjacent to the school. The medical library had been located in the Thomas Library Building on the circle at the university. The space was totally inadequate, and when the school of medicine moved a mile away, up the hill,

to what is now the health sciences center, the library on the circle was no longer accessible to the medical community.

After a significant struggle, the medical library was moved to the B level of University Hospital/School of Medicine Building. While the space provided the proximity that the health sciences community needed, the facility was described as the worst in the United States. Since the university did not have funds to build a new library, Priscilla applied for a National Library of Medicine Resource Improvement Project Grant. Her proposal was the last building grant funded by the National Library of Medicine. The funding was received in January 1968, with a groundbreaking in the fall of that year. The building was completed without any direct state funding.

At the same time that Priscilla was working on the new building, she recognized the potential of automation for the future of libraries. The Spencer S. Eccles Health Sciences Library was the first participating institution in PHILSOM, the computer network for medical libraries led by Estelle Brodman at Washington University in St. Louis. The decision to join PHILSOM established the Utah library's commitment to innovation, especially in the use of computers, resulting in a national reputation that continues to this day.

The new library was dedicated on October 4, 1971. It was a triumph; the ceremony was held out on the library plaza on a beautiful day. Priscilla's handling of the dedication was terrific, and it secured the continued support of the Eccles family, a crucial component in the success of the library. For everyone involved, it was a matter of going from the darkness of the lower level of the hospital to the bright daylight of the new building, with expansive views of the Salt Lake Valley and surrounding hillside. It is a tribute to Priscilla's skill and understanding

of libraries that the building continues to be an attractive and functional facility forty years later and one that has been used as a model for a number of other health sciences libraries. Throughout her career, she was extremely proud of the building and of her efforts in designing it as a functional and beautiful building.

The challenges of adequate funding for the library were a constant for Priscilla. Recognizing the limits of state funding, Priscilla applied her grant expertise in crafting successful proposals to the National Library of Medicine and to local foundations. Following the completion of the building, Priscilla had three grants underway simultaneously. She had an outreach grant that promoted library services across the state, and she had an automation project that used computers to publish an index to US government publications in the health sciences. This index, known as *MEDOC*, was published for twenty-five years. Finally, she had a very large learning resources grant to enhance the curriculum in the health sciences, including the introduction of advanced technologies into the medical curriculum. The project built a large audiovisual collection and a computer-assisted instruction system. Her success with National Library of Medicine grants led to her appointment to the National Library of Medicine's Biomedical Library Review Committee, the committee that reviewed grant applications submitted to the library. Priscilla was one of the first librarians to be appointed to this committee.

Without question, her most successful proposal was the one she developed for National Library of Medicine initiative known as the Integrated Academic Information Management System (IAIMS). This proposal involved an unprecedented

cooperation among the health sciences colleges of the university, the school of medicine, the university hospital, and the library. This initiative was highly competitive, and the University of Utah was one of only four projects funded at that time. The IAIMS vision that Priscilla developed recognized the intersection of the power of computer technologies, the importance of collaboration, and the central role of libraries in information management. This vision continues to guide the Eccles library today.

Finally, one of Priscilla's most exciting and gratifying experiences as a librarian was her appearance before the Health and Human Services Committee of the US Senate in 1981. She was asked to testify about competition between the National Library of Medicine and the Institute for Scientific Information. In response to a question from Utah Senator Orrin Hatch, she stated:

What I find puzzling is the idea of it being competitive because the services are different...Dr. Garfield himself, within the last year on the occasion of the 100[th] anniversary of the *Index Medicus*, stated that his service and the *Index Medicus* do not compete but compliment [*sic*] one another. I would not dream of trying to run my library without the services of the Institute for Scientific Information. [1]

Her testimony proved to be crucial in defending the National Library of Medicine.

The respect of her colleagues is reflected in her elected positions in the profession and the awards she received, including election to the Board of Directors of the Medical Library Association, chair of the Midcontinental Chapter of the Medical Library Association, president of the Utah Library Association, and Fellow of the Medical Library

Association and winning of the Utah Library Association Distinguished Service Award. When elected as a Fellow of the Medical Library Association, Priscilla remarked that "she never felt... [that she] should have been in such distinguished company" [2].

When the news about Priscilla's death began to circulate in May of 2011, a flood of emails expressed how much Priscilla had meant to the profession and how much she meant to librarians across the country. She is survived by her niece, her three nephews, and twelve beloved grandnieces and grandnephews.

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2. Bunting A. Transcript of oral history with Priscilla Maltby Mayden. 25-26 Jun 1988. (Print copies of the oral history can be found through the Regional Medical Libraries. An oral history summary is available at <[http://www.mlanet.org/about/history/mayden\\_p.html](http://www.mlanet.org/about/history/mayden_p.html)>. [cited 19 Sep 2011].)

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